

SCHOOL COUNSELORS PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT VIOLENCE
INTERVENTION/PREVENTION PROGRAMS

by

Angela Dalhoe

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Investigation Advisor

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University of Wisconsin-Stout
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The Graduate College
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

Dalhoe	Angela	L.	
(Writer)	(Last Name)	(First)	(Initial)

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(Title)

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The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which violence intervention/prevention programs are being used within Wisconsin public schools. The effectiveness of these programs will also be evaluated based on the opinions of the school counselors surveyed.

A survey was sent to 159 school guidance counselors within Wisconsin CESA districts #10 and #11. This survey was used to collect data pertaining to the violence intervention/prevention programs currently being used within their schools. Data was also collected regarding counselor's perceptions of each program's effectiveness.

The data collected was analyzed to determine response percent rates for the 12 violence intervention/prevention strategies and programs listed in the survey along with four other survey questions.

The results of this study will provide a better understanding of the violence intervention/prevention programs that are being used in Wisconsin public schools. It will also provide information as to each program's effectiveness according to the school guidance counselors surveyed. This data can then be used by schools in their pursuit to implement violence intervention/prevention programs that will assist them in creating a safer learning environment for all students and staff.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Over the past decade, youth violence in America has risen dramatically. The media has brought us countless tragic details as an American child is arrested for a violent crime every five minutes and another is killed by gunfire every two hours (Webber, 1997). It is easy to believe that this epidemic of violence is confined to the overpopulated, poverty stricken urban areas of our country, but it is not that simple. Unfortunately, this problem has been on the rise in our schools for the past two years. Listed in chronological order, the following examples show a frightening pattern of violence. On October 1, 1997, a 16 year old boy enters his high school in Pearl, Mississippi where he shoots nine classmate. Two are left dead from the attack. On December 1 of that same year, a 14 year old boy kills three students and wounds five others during a prayer group at Heath High School West Paducah, Kentucky. Only three months into 1998 on March 24, four students and a teacher are killed and ten others wounded in Jonesboro, Arkansas. This time the killers were ages 11 and 13. There were similar cases of school violence throughout 1998, but none of which reached the magnitude of the April 20, 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in

Littleton Colorado. Two students were responsible for killing twelve of their classmates and one teacher as well as wounding 23 others. They then took their own lives, bringing the death toll of the Columbine shooting to 15 (CBS News, 1999). During this two year period, communities around the country, both large and small, have been devastated by the carnage that has taken place within their schools. American children are living in fear as they witness tragedies much like the one in Littleton CO played out in horrific detail on the evening news.

The time has come for every citizen to take responsibility for the actions of our young people. The time has come for every citizen to acknowledge that violence in our schools is a serious social problem. Above all, the time has come for everyone to search for a solution to this problem to ensure that future generations will be able to feel safe within their schools.

The Children's Defense Fund estimates that an American Child is arrested for a violent crime every five minutes and killed by gun fire every two hours (Webber, 1997). For reasons like these, it is now more important than ever for adults to be proper role models to our younger generation. If as adults we are hypocritical about violence, what type of a message are we sending the children who are looking to

us for guidance? As a country, we contribute billions of dollars annually to a media industry that often glorifies and glamorizes violence as the basis of its existence. This industry encompasses a variety of markets including television, video and computer games, movies, and music. By accepting the violence that this industry glorifies, we are supporting the very thing that we have labeled our nation's number one problem. The national Television Violence Study concluded that viewing violence in the mass media can lead to aggressive behavior and become part of long term behavior patterns. It was also reported through this study that watching violent programming can cause the viewer to become desensitized toward the victims of violent crimes (Hepburn, 1997).

According to the American Psychological Association, parents can take an active role in monitoring the violence that their children are exposed to through the media industry. They are encouraged to watch at least one episode of the programming their child is viewing and banning anything that they consider too violent or offensive. It is also recommended that parents explain questionable incidents involving violence and discuss alternatives to using violence as a way to solve problems (American Psychological Association, 1999). By doing this,

parents are taking an active role to decrease the amount of violence their children will be exposed to.

There are three major effects that viewing violence has on children. They may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others. They may become more fearful of the world around them and they may be more likely to behave in an aggressive manner toward others (American Psychological Association, 1999). If a child is exposed to violence and these effects occur, they are certain to carry over into the school where the child is spending such a large amount of their time. A personality change created within the home or community is not going to limit itself to those areas. To keep violence out of the schools, we must keep violence away from the children. If we truly want to make a difference, we must first look at our own ability as adults to model civility. We cannot expect from our younger population what we do not practice ourselves.

Statement of the Problem

School violence is an issue that has recently been placed under close scrutiny by many groups of concerned individuals. The purpose of this study was to collect data pertaining to school counselor's perceptions of the topic of school violence and the school based intervention/prevention programs currently being used to reduce it.

A survey was mailed to one practicing counselor at each school level (elementary, middle, and high school) in the Wisconsin CESA districts #10 and #11 on April 22, 1999.

The results of this study may be beneficial for individuals who are interested in creating or implementing violence intervention/prevention programs.

Research Questions

Do the school counselors surveyed view youth violence/gangs as a problem within their schools as well as nationwide?

Of the violence intervention/prevention programs listed on the survey, which ones are or are not being implemented within these schools?

How do the counselors view the appropriateness of the violence intervention/prevention programs listed on the survey?

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms need to be defined.

Closed Campus Requirement that students stay on the school campus during the entire school day

Entertainment Industry The corporations responsible for producing and marketing movies, music, television programs, and video games

Mediation Skills Ability to use problem solving and conflict resolution effectively

Mentoring Programs Sustained, close, developmental relationships between an older, more experienced individual and a younger person

School Violence A physical act of aggression toward another person or object that takes place in or on school grounds

Teacher Training Information to educators regarding crisis intervention strategies

Violence Hotline An anonymous number for students to report weapon possessions on school grounds

Zero Tolerance Mandatory expulsion for acts of violence or weapon possession

Assumptions

There are several assumptions being made within this research. These are:

1. It is assumed that the counselors involved in the survey are answering the questions honestly and accurately.
2. It is assumed that Wisconsin CESA districts #10 and #11 are representative of other districts with similar demographics.

3. It is assumed that the counselors participating in this study understood the terminology being used and the definitions provided.

Limitations

There are several limitations involved in the research for this study. These are:

1. This research is limited by using only two CESA districts for data collection.

2. This research is limited by the fact that the instrument has not been tested for validity and reliability.

3. This research is limited by the participant's knowledge and understanding of the terms being used in the survey.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The seventh goal of the National Education Goals states that by the year 2000, "all schools in America will be free of drugs and violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol, and offer a disciplined environment that is conducive to learning" (Violence and Discipline Problems in US Public Schools, 96-97). This goal addresses the apparent need for change within America's schools. With the problem of youth violence on the rise, more people are acknowledging that swift and effective intervention is needed to protect our children as they move through this country's educational system.

In this chapter, a summary of the research on school violence prevalence, causes, and prevention/intervention programs will be discussed.

Prevalence of School Violence

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, study results to date show that there were 173 incidents of school associated violent deaths between July 1994 and June 1998. This study noted that the number of multiple victim events has increased since the 1992-93 school year. In the time between August 1995 and June 1998, there were an average of five multiple victim events

per year. This number is up from one multiple victim event per year between August 1992 and July 1995 (CDC Media Relations, 1999). It is important to note that these statistics are not taking in to account the school shooting that took place on April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado leaving 15 dead including the two student gunmen.

The recent increase in school shootings has captured the attention of the American public, but there are other, less publicized statistics of violence within the schools. Ten percent of all public schools experienced one or more serious violent crimes (including rape, physical attacks with a weapon, and murder) that were reported to law enforcement officials during the 1996-97 school year. During this same school year, 190,000 physical attacks or fights without a weapon were considered serious enough to report to law enforcement officials (Violence and Discipline Problems in US Public Schools, 1996-97).

In the wake of these shootings and other increased acts of violence, school districts of all sizes and locations are re-evaluating their safety and security procedures. Administrators agree that there seems to be an increase in youth violence involving guns and other weapons (Agron). Even though school homicides and shootings are

not the norm, ensuring a safe learning environment is something that all school administrators must address.

Causes of Youth Violence

In order to fully understand the problem of youth violence and its increase in the schools, it is important to investigate the sources from which it stems. There are many areas that need to be examined when looking for the causes of violent behavior in juveniles. The two that are most often addressed include the young person's family and the extent to which they are exposed to violence through the entertainment industry. These factors are significant for several reasons and can even be linked together through a cause and effect approach.

If a child has a history of family maltreatment, it increases their chance of committing youth violence by 24 percent (Thornberry, 1994). When these young people have children of their own, it is likely that this dysfunctional cycle will repeat itself.

Without the proper parental supervision, young people are likely to be exposed to massive amounts of violence on television, movies, video games, and song lyrics. This problem has not gone unnoticed and certainly cannot be denied. On June 1, 1999, President Clinton launched a federal inquiry into the entertainment industry's marketing

of violent movies as well as video games and movies to children. President Clinton was quoted as saying, "we can not longer ignore the well-documented connection between violence in the media and the effects that it has on children's behavior" (Fiore and Gerstenzang, 1999).

Violence Intervention and Prevention Programs

The recent outbreaks of school shootings have focused attention toward what is being done within the school building to ensure a safe learning environment for each student. There are many strategies and programs being used all over the country to assist in the reduction of youth violence within our schools. Most of these plans require cooperation and assistance from school administration and staff, the student, and sometimes the student's family and community. There are several approaches to each violence intervention/prevention program, and they are not always agreed upon by everyone involved in the implementation.

One prevention method that has recently been implemented by some public schools is the use of student uniforms. The purpose of school uniforms as a violence prevention technique is based on the theory that they reduce disciplinary incidents, improve student attitudes, and create a more serious learning environment (Paliokas and Rist, 1996). President Clinton is showing support for

this particular violence prevention method by providing school districts with a manual that offers information and guidelines for implementing a school uniform policy.

One disadvantage that has been noted regarding school uniforms is that they reduce the probability of school staff observing at risk students within the schools. If all of the students are dressed alike, it makes it more difficult to identify those students who may be involved with drugs and gangs or those who are experiencing neglect at home (Wilkins, 1999). This could hinder the ability of teachers and administration to intervene on the student's behalf before it becomes a more serious problem. Wilkins noted that there is a con for every pro when dealing with the issue of school uniforms. It appears to simple be a "band-aid" solution to a much larger problem and will do little in the long run to change the lives of students. Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters are being used in many communities to provide young people an opportunity for positive and supportive role modeling. While most adolescents are growing toward healthy, productive adults, 25% are at significant risk of not reaching this goal due to their involvement in certain negative behaviors. These behaviors include such things as alcohol and drug abuse, unsafe sexual activity, truancy,

and delinquency. Another 25% of adolescents are at moderate risk due to slight involvement in the previously mentioned activities (Creating Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1996). A 1992 study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation found that adolescents spend 40% of their non-sleeping time alone, with peers without adult supervision, or with individuals who are not considered positive role models. Mentoring programs use this time to affect a young person's life by creating a sustained, close, developmental relationship between them and an older, more experienced individual. There are many types of mentoring programs being used throughout the country with a variety of sponsoring organizations. Schools are now taking a more active role in pursuing these programs with the goal of violence prevention in mind.

The implementation of a closed campus policy is being used by many public schools. A closed school campus requires that students stay on the school grounds during the entire academic day. Students are only allowed to leave with a written request from a parent/guardian and permission from school personnel. Closed campus also means that all school visitors must register for a pass in the main office before continuing through the building. A positive correlation exists between closed campuses and

academic achievement and higher grade point averages as well as a higher participation rate in intramural programs and student activities (California Department of Education, 1997). Other benefits to a closed campus include a reduction in daytime residential crime, resulting in fewer calls to police officials and a better relationship between the school and law enforcement. The goal to create a safer learning environment often affects the community as well as the school.

There are many different ways to teach young people to avoid violence altogether or to keep conflicts from becoming violent. These skills can be taught in the schools through conflict resolution and mediation training. Programs like these help young people to develop sympathy for others, learn to control their emotions, and increase their communication and problem solving skills (Schwartz, 1995). This type of training is appropriate for all age groups because it can be easily modified to incorporate a variety of situations that an individual at any age may face. This violence prevention strategy can be taken one step further to include the use of peer mediators to assist in conflict resolution. Using this approach, specially trained student mediators work with their peers to solve minor personal disputes. These programs reduce the use of

traditional discipline (suspension and detention), encourage problem solving, decrease the need for teacher involvement in student conflicts, and create an improved, more peaceful school environment (Creating Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1996). It is important for adults to role model proper conflict resolution and mediation strategies in their daily lives. Young people cannot be expected to perform and assist with nonviolent resolution practices if they do not see them being used by adults.

Teachers have more contact with students than other adults in a school setting. Because of this, teacher training is being modified to emphasize violence intervention/prevention within the schools. With an increased amount of training, teachers can learn the correct process of conflict resolution as well as how to deal with an aggressive student. Most states recognize the duty of a teacher to include crisis intervention because they have been hired both to teach and to promote the welfare and safety of the students (Callahan, 1998). In order to maintain safe schools, educators need to obtain the knowledge and skills to implement quality, school-wide programs of violence prevention (Gable, Manning, and Bullock , 1997).

Another violence prevention program involves school administration simply not tolerating those students who are unable to follow the rules. The term "zero tolerance" is becoming well known throughout the American education system. Every state has now adopted a zero tolerance law that orders school districts to expel any student who brings a gun to school. This measure is in place to comply with the 1995 federal gun-free-schools law that requires states to pass this legislation or forfeit federal education aid (Porter, 1997). Individual school districts may hold zero tolerance policies on other offenses such as fighting, harassment, and drug use. With a zero tolerance policy in place, schools are obligated to follow it under any circumstances. However, widely publicized cases of strict punishments for unintentional transgressions have caused some people to take a closer look at zero tolerance within the schools. Those against this practice argue that zero tolerance has more to do with the image it portrays than the actual effects it produces. They claim that the primary function of harsh punishments under zero tolerance is not to modify behavior but rather to reassert the power of administrative authority (Skiba and Peterson, 1999). Schools are still in the process of modifying zero tolerance policies. At this point, there is only the one

federal regulation that requires a mandatory one year expulsion for any student who brings a gun to school.

Some of the more aggressive and invasive approaches to school violence prevention include locker checks (both random and with suspicion), the use of metal detectors, and police or guard patrol of school grounds. In order to implement a search policy, schools need to contact their school or local district attorney, or the state attorney general. Once the policy is in place, schools need only "reasonable suspicion" to conduct a search. Unlike the police, school officials do not need a warrant prior to conducting a search (Creating Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1996). Another form of searching for illicit items takes place through the use of metal detectors. The use of metal detectors is rare in America's public schools and according to the US Department of Education, only one percent of schools use them on a daily basis (Violence and Discipline Problems in US Public Schools 1996-97). Many schools feel the need to conduct searches of students and their property for security purposes, but students tend to view it as an invasion of their privacy. It has been determined in several states that what the student brings to school should only be what he or she is willing to have seen by school personnel. Once in the school, the priority is for

safety, not privacy (Creating Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1996).

Unlike metal detectors, the use of police or guard patrol of school grounds is common and on the rise. There are various forms of security staffing procedures being used in schools across the country. Three of the most common are school security departments, school police departments, and School Resource Officer (SRO) programs (Trump, 1998). A school security department is run by the school district who is also responsible for the hiring and training of personnel. Depending upon state and local laws, individuals employed by these programs may or may not carry a weapon. School police departments are paid for by the district and employ licensed law enforcement officials. This form of security differs from the School Resource Officer programs where the officers are assigned to patrol a designated school within their local law enforcement district. With any one of these programs, the presence of police authority is apparent to the students attending the patrolled school. A survey conducted in 1997 by the Center for Prevention of School Violence found that out of 300 officers (within the schools), in 35 states, 97 percent carried weapons (Worden, 1999). There is little debate regarding the need for school security, but there is

controversy as to whether or not those protecting the schools should be allowed to carry weapons. This opposition arises from the belief that armed guards within the schools creates a hostile or prison-like image and atmosphere of education (Trump, 1998). Supporters of these programs feel that if there are enough threats to justify using a security program, it is logical to conclude that those threats justify having the officers being fully and properly equipped.

There is not one specific school violence intervention or prevention program that will eliminate the problem entirely. In a survey of public school principals, 78 percent of the report using some type of formal school violence prevention or reduction program (Violence and Discipline Problems in US Public Schools, 1996-97). Many schools work with a variety of programs to determine which one best meets their particular needs. As we approach the year 2000, school violence prevention programs are becoming a consistent and necessary part of every school's curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the focus of this study including research questions, a description of the subjects studied as well as how they were selected for inclusion in this study, the survey instrument used for data collection, procedures for data collection, and the limitations of this methodology.

Research Questions

This study focused on three research questions. They were:

1. Do the school counselors surveyed view youth violence/gangs as a problem within their schools as well as nationwide?
2. Of the violence intervention/prevention programs listed on the survey, which ones are or are not being implemented within these schools and how do the counselors view their effectiveness?
3. How do the counselors view the appropriateness of the violence intervention/prevention programs listed in this survey?

Description of Subjects

The subjects selected for this study were school counselors from all grade levels in the Wisconsin CESA #10 and #11 districts during the spring of 1999. A computer printout provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction listed all of the practicing counselors in these districts as well as their level and the school or schools they serviced.

Sample Selection

From the list provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, one counselor representing each school level (elementary, middle, and high school) was selected at random to receive a survey. This procedure was used for all 69 school districts represented in the Wisconsin CESA #10 and #11 districts. If a district had more than one high school, a survey was sent to a counselor at each high school and then to the same number of middle and elementary school counselors in that district.

Instrumentation

A survey was developed after extensive review of the literature pertaining to youth violence and school violence intervention/prevention programs. The survey consisted of 33 questions that provided information dealing with the counselor's current level of practice, the size of their

student body, and their opinions regarding youth violence as a problem both nationwide as well as in their own schools. The survey also included a list of the twelve violence intervention/prevention programs identified in the literature review and inquired whether or not they were being implemented in their schools. If they were, the counselors then responded as to their effectiveness. If they were not, the counselors were asked whether or not they thought the program would be appropriate for their school. The survey concluded with three open questions dealing with youth violence. These questions provided an opportunity for counselors to share their opinions and provide input on the topic of school violence intervention and prevention programs.

Data Collection and Analysis

159 surveys were mailed to school counselors representing 69 Wisconsin school districts on April 22, 1999. The cover letter enclosed described the study and requested a response by May 7, 1999. A 69% return rate was achieved in this study with 111 surveys being completed. The data was analyzed to obtain percent responses to each of the survey questions. The responses to the open ended questions were compiled and compared.

Limitations

The methodology may contain the following limitations:

1. Subject selection consisted of those counselors working in Wisconsin CESA district #10 and #11 and therefore may not be representative of the population.

2. The survey used in this study was created by the researcher and has not been tested for validity and reliability.

Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to the methodology of this study. The following chapters include the findings regarding the research questions and the study's conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate school counselors' perceptions of current violence intervention/prevention programs. The results of the survey mailed on April 22, 199 will be presented in this chapter through demographic information and responses to the research questions.

Demographic Information

The sample of this study was taken from the 111 returned surveys that were completed by school counselors within the Wisconsin CESA districts #10 and #11. Of the study sample, 32% identified themselves as elementary school counselors, 17% middle school, 24% high school, and 27% combined as multiple level school counselors.

Data pertaining to school size was collected based on three levels. Of the respondents, 44% identified themselves as practicing in a school with an enrollment of 0-399 students, 41% worked in a school with 400-699 students, and 14% were practicing in schools with and enrollment greater than 700 students (1% missing).

Research Question One

Do the school counselors surveyed view youth violence/gangs as a problem within their schools as well as nationwide?

Of the 111 school counselors responding to the study regarding youth violence:

There were 59% who consider youth violence a serious problem nationwide, but only 1% find it to be a serious problem within their own schools.

A total of 38% see it as a moderate problem nationwide and 28% as a moderate problem within their own schools.

Only 2% consider youth violence a minor problem nationwide while 63% note it as a minor problem within their own schools.

Only 1% of school counselors reported that they believe there to be no problem with youth violence nationwide and 8% do not consider it to be any problem within their own schools.

Of the 111 school counselors responding to the study regarding gangs:

There were 43% who consider gangs a serious problem nationwide, but only 2% find it to be a serious problem within their own schools.

A total of 43% see it as a moderate problem nationwide yet only 2% as a moderate problem within their own schools.

Only 6% consider gangs a minor problem nationwide while 48% note it as a minor problem within their own schools.

There were no school counselors reporting that they believed gangs were no problem nationwide yet 48% do not consider there to be any problem within their own schools.

Research Question Two

Of the violence intervention/prevention programs listed on the survey, which ones are or are not being implemented within these schools?

The responses to survey question two are based on valid percentages and are reported in Table 1. Of the twelve violence intervention/prevention programs listed in the survey, locker checks with suspicion (89%), zero tolerance (80%), and closed campuses (79%) had the highest rates of implementation. The lowest rates of implementation included school uniforms (0%), metal detectors (1%), and violence hotlines (5%).

Table 1. Implementation of Violence Intervention Programs

	Implemented	Not Implemented
School Uniforms	0%	100%
Mentoring Programs	56% 22% recent 34% prior to 1998	44% 18% considering
Closed Campus	79% 9% recent 70% prior to 1998	21% 3% considering
Teaching Mediation Skills	69% 9% recent 60% prior to 1998	31% 17% considering
Zero Tolerance	80% 9% recent 71% prior to 1998	20% 6% considering
Random Locker Checks	62% 8% recent 54% prior to 1998	38% 4% considering
Locker Checks with Suspicion	89% 9% recent 80% prior to 1998	11% 2% considering
Peer Mediators	41% 8% recent 33% prior to 1998	59% 20% considering
Metal Detectors	1% 0% recent 1% prior to 1998	99% 2% considering
Teacher Training	61% 15% recent 46% prior to 1998	39% 17% considering
Violence Hotline	5% 2% recent 3% prior to 1998	95% 17% considering
Police/Guard Patrol	16% 7% recent 9% prior to 1998	84% 3% considering

Research Question Three

How do the counselors view the appropriateness of the violence intervention/prevention programs listed on the survey?

The responses to survey question three are based on valid percentages and are reported in Table 2. Of the twelve violence intervention/prevention programs listed on the survey, school uniforms (56%), the use of metal detectors (50%), and police or guard patrol (41%) were considered the most inappropriate as violence intervention/prevention strategies. The use of zero tolerance (78%), teaching mediation skills (75%), and locker checks with suspicion (74%) were considered the most appropriate.

Table 2. Counselors Perceptions of the Appropriateness of Violence Intervention Programs

	Not Appropriate	Appropriate with Modifications	Appropriate	Need More Information
School Uniforms	56%	10%	8%	26%
Mentoring Programs	0%	32%	62%	6%
Closed Campus	7%	23%	65%	5%
Teaching Mediation Skills	2%	18%	75%	5%
Zero Tolerance	0%	17%	78%	5%
Random Locker Checks	10%	21%	64%	5%
Locker Checks with Suspicion	5%	17%	74%	4%
Peer Mediators	6%	24%	62%	8%
Metal Detectors	50%	14%	13%	23%
Teacher Training	1%	21%	72%	6%
Violence Hotline	12%	24%	45%	19%
Police Patrol	41%	22%	25%	12%

Counselors responded to open ended questions at the end of the survey. They were first asked to describe any strategies or programs being used within their schools that were not listed in the survey. A sample of representative responses to that question are as follows:

- "Big/little buddies - whole class rooms that pair up (6th grade and 1st grade) to do projects together. Service projects for the community and school"
- "Anger management support groups"
- "At risk programs to help get students back on track"
- "Pair older students with younger ones to develop empathy and compassion"
- "CHAMPS - Champs have and model positive peer skills"
- "Counselor mediated conflict resolution meetings"

Counselors were also asked if they believed that an increased emphasis on violence intervention/prevention programs would decrease the occurrence of school violence. A sample of representative responses to that question are as follows:

- "Yes, but the media must curb violence, violent behavior etc."
- "Yes, education/prevention are key"

- "Yes because a plan on how to prevent or how to handle situations is essential in today's schools"
- "There needs to be more home and parent involvement"
- "I don't think so, I get very discouraged and wonder if it really helps. Until society at large and the media change, we at schools have minimal impact"
- "Yes, it brings attention to the problem and lets kids know that we are doing something for their safety and lets perpetrators know that we are aware"

Summary

The results from this study show an overall consistency between the violence intervention/prevention programs being used within the schools and the counselors perceptions of their appropriateness. The largest discrepancy in the data occurs in research question one. There is a considerably higher percentage of counselors who view violence and gangs as a problem nation wide compared to those who see it as a problem within their own schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings, to draw conclusions based upon the analysis of the data, and to suggest recommendations for further study.

Summary and Conclusions

With violence in schools on the rise, there is little debate concerning the need for intervention and prevention programs. There are currently a variety of these programs being used in schools throughout the country. Although there is a consensus regarding the necessity of violence prevention programming, opinions certainly differ as to each strategy's effectiveness. Individual schools must find the correct program to meet the needs of both their students and the staff.

Discussion

Based on the research of this study, 99 percent of the counselors surveyed consider youth violence, at some level, to be a problem nationwide. There were 59 percent of these counselors who believed the problem to be severe nationwide, but only 1 percent considered it severe within their own schools. When asked about the issue of gangs, 43 percent responded that gangs were a severe problem

nationwide but only 2 percent felt that gangs were a serious problem within their own schools.

This data shows a pattern in the attitudes of the counselors surveyed in this study. While most of them consider violence a problem, the amount of them who consider it a problem within their own schools is significantly lower. There are numerous possible explanations for this discrepancy. One could speculate that the counselor's are overlooking the problems within their own school and reporting a lower occurrence of violence than there actually is. It may also be possible that the schools selected for this study simply do not encounter the problems of violence that occur at higher rates nationwide.

Recommendations

If this study were to be expanded upon, it would be beneficial to closely examine the inconsistency mentioned in the above conclusions. In this future study, the counselor's opinions regarding school violence could be expanded upon in order to better understand the school's perception of the problem. It would also be beneficial to use a sample that is more diverse in school size and location. It would also be beneficial to survey the students as well as the counselors. This would provide

data regarding their perception of violence within the schools. The student responses could be compared to the counselors or other teacher's data to determine if there is a difference of opinion regarding this issue. This information may be beneficial in creating violence intervention/prevention programs as well as increasing staff awareness as to student's perceptions of violence within their schools.

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Appendix A.

SURVEY OF VIOLENCE* INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN THE SCHOOLS

*A physical act of aggression toward another person or object

Please check the appropriate response.

1. Current counseling level(s):

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ Middle
- ☐ High School
- ☐ K-12

2. Size of student body (of level(s) marked in question 1):

- ☐ 0-399 students
- ☐ 400-699 students
- ☐ 700 or more students

Please use the following scale to complete questions 3 through 6. Circle the number that best describes your feelings.

1 = no problem

3 = moderate problem

2 = minor problem

4 = serious problem

3. How would you rate the occurrence of youth violence nation wide?

1 2 3

4

4. How would you rate the occurrence of youth violence in your school?

1 2 3

4

5. How would you rate the occurrence of youth gangs nation wide?

1 2 3

4

6. How would you rate the occurrence of youth gangs in your school?

1 2 3

4

Please use the following scale to respond to questions 7

through 18. Circle the number that best describes the

degree to which each violence intervention/prevention

practice or program is being implemented in the schools you

serve. These practices/programs are often implemented for

the purpose of violence prevention or intervention.

1 = not currently implemented

3 =

recently implemented (during the 98-99 school year)

2 = considering implementation
4 =
implemented prior to the 98-99 school year

7. School uniforms

1 2 3 4

8. Mentoring programs - sustained, close, developmental
relationships

between an older, more experienced individual and a
younger person

1 2 3 4

9. Closed campus

1 2 3 4

10. Teaching mediation skills - problem solving and
conflict resolution

1 2 3 4

11. Zero tolerance policy - mandatory expulsion for acts
of violence or
weapon possession

1 2 3 4

12. Random locker checks for illicit items - without
student consent

1 2 3 4

13. Locker checks with suspicion for illicit items -

without student consent 1 2 3 4

14. Peer mediators - students assigned to assist in

conflict resolution between

other students

1 2 3 4

15. Use of metal detectors for school surveillance

1 2 3 4

16. Teacher training - on crisis intervention

1 2 3 4

17. Violence hotline - anonymous number for students to

report weapon

possessions on school grounds

1 2 3 4

18. Police or guard patrol of school and grounds

1 2 3 4

Please continue on back of page

Please use the following scale to respond to questions 19 through 30. Circle the number that best describes your feelings pertaining to each school violence intervention/prevention practice or program.

1 = this practice would not be (*is not*) appropriate in my school

2 = this practice would be (*is*) appropriate in my school with modifications

3 = this practice would be (*is*) appropriate in my school for reducing incidences of violence

4 = would have to have more information to make my decision

19. School uniforms

1 2 3 4

20. Mentoring programs - sustained, close, developmental relationships

between an older, more experienced individual and a younger person

1 2 3 4

21. Closed campus

1 2 3 4

22. Teaching mediation skills - problem solving and
conflict resolution 1 2 3 4

23. Zero tolerance policy - mandatory expulsion for
acts of violence or
weapon possession

1 2 3 4

24. Random locker checks for illicit items - without
student consent 1 2 3 4

25. Locker checks with suspicion for illicit items -
without student consent 1 2 3 4

26. Peer mediators - students assigned to assist in
conflict resolution between
other students

1 2 3 4

27 Use of metal detectors for school surveillance

1 2 3 4

28. Teacher training - on crisis intervention

1 2 3 4

29. Violence hotline - anonymous number for students to
report weapon

possessions on school grounds

1 2 3 4

30. Police or Guard patrol of school and grounds

1 2 3 4

Please respond to the following questions

30. What percent of the violence in your school would you
attribute to gang involvement?

31. If your school currently implementing any strategies
or programs not listed above, please describe.

32. Do you believe that an increased emphasis on violence intervention/prevention programs will decrease school violence?

Why or why not?

